

Animal Care Outreach Activities - FY 2004

Delivery of the Animal Care program involves enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act. Our mission is to provide leadership in establishing acceptable standards of humane animal care and treatment and to monitor and achieve compliance with the Animal Welfare Act through inspections, education, and cooperative efforts, and to provide leadership in establishing a cooperative program for enforcement and education concerning the Horse Protection Act. To aid in this endeavor, Animal Care has developed and maintains an active outreach program, supporting a permanent, full-time position in Legislative and Public Affairs to manage many aspects of our outreach. In addition, each employee is charged with providing information and assistance to the public upon request, and through the performance of their assigned duties. As a result of program commitment to outreach efforts, Animal Care has established 2 Outreach Committees comprised of a broad cross-section of field, Regional offices and Headquarters employees to develop specific outreach initiatives for FY 2004 and beyond.

The following highlights outreach efforts made in FY 2004, grouped according to the four objectives of the “APHIS Program Delivery Outreach Plan.”

1. Improve delivery of programs and services to existing customers.

Current distribution of the Animal Care quarterly industry report is over 3000. This publication updates customers on Animal Care activities and accomplishments. We have more than doubled distribution of the report since its inception during FY 1997. This report has historically been mailed to recipients but is now distributed electronically and is also available on the Animal Care home page at www.aphis.usda.gov/ac.

Result: Not only does this report provide information and updates on Animal Care programs and initiatives to a broad range of parties, both regulated and nonregulated, but using electronic distribution and inclusion of the publication on our web site allows fast, reliable service to any member of the public and any regulated party.

Animal Care continued its commitment to providing information and assistance to the public, responding to over 30,000 of telephone inquiries (headquarters and Regional offices), and answering over 9000 pieces of correspondence, including regular mail, e-mail, faxes, and write-in campaigns. Animal Care also serves as the source for over 1,000 pieces of executive correspondence.

Result: Animal Care’s communication policy and handling of

correspondence and inquiries from the public allows us to disseminate information to and educate a broad spectrum of interested parties with critical information on the Animal Welfare Act, the Horse Protection Act, and our enforcement efforts. Information requests frequently involve inquiries as to the requirements for licensure (when it is needed and how to become licensed – approximately 4100 prelicensing packages were sent in response to inquiries), providing information to persons not previously served under these Acts. Animal Care has distributed over 22,000 copies of the AWA and AWA regulations and standards (a combined booklet) in FY 2004, as well as over 1,500 units of HPA information, including Scar Rule pamphlets and a training video.

Animal Care continues to employ information technology in its contact with customers, stakeholders, and other members of the general public. We maintain an e-mail box for headquarters and each of the regional offices, highlighted on our home page, and provided e-mail responses to over 400 messages per month. In FY 2003, we have responded to an estimated 5,300 e-mail inquiries. Our home page and web site receives an over 12,000 hits a year. In addition, we maintain an automated voice response service number for questions about traveling with animals. This 24/7 toll-free information system averages about 3,000 calls a year.

Result: These communication services allow over 20,000 parties per year to query Animal Care and obtain information they would likely not request through regular correspondence.

Animal Care continues to improve its web site construction. In FY 2000, we upgraded it to be the first USDA home page that is visually-handicapped accessible. We also provide many of our documents, including the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), the AWA regulations and standards, the Horse Protection Act (HPA), the HPA regulations, policies, fact sheets, and other published booklets and technical bulletins on our home page. Animal Care “current” or open regulatory documents published in the Federal Register are linked to our home page. A direct link to our e-mail box is also provided on the site. The Animal Care web site averages over 1000 hits a month (over 12,000 a year).

Result: This service allows persons to contact and obtain information about our program and its services 24 hours a day, at the convenience of the public. Use of electronic media for information dissemination allows us to serve more people than relying solely on traditional methods of correspondence.

In addition to our own web page, we maintain the web page for the APHIS Native Working Group (ANAWG).

Result: This web-page provides a focus for information about APHIS programs and their impact on Native American programs and enterprises.

Animal Care responded to approximately 800 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for Animal Care documents in FY 2004. To aid in improved response to FOIA requests, we began posting annual reports from research facilities on our web site. Animal Care is currently developing an on-line application (initial and renewal) for licensure and registration process. On October 1, 2001, our E-FOIA (electronic FOIA) site was brought on line. Inspection reports could be accessed and downloaded directly from our database, providing information easily and rapidly to all interested parties. Based on legal and security reasons, at this time, the Department closed the E-FOIA site. It should be re-established as DOJ and given USDA the go ahead to do so. Proprietary information concerns need to be addressed before the new system goes on line. Animal Care is also developing a new database that will make the project easier technologically. All information accessible through this site can still be requested through our Regional offices and the APHIS FOIA office.

Result: Electronic access to inspection reports, as well as regular access for all releasable information under FOIA provides a service to all regulated and nonregulated parties by opening our procedures to the public in the most timely and safe manner possible under the law.

Animal Care continued its ongoing program of cooperation and communication with stakeholders, with employees participating in and providing presentations at international, national, regional, and local industry and stakeholder meetings. Animal Care has made over 200 presentations at over 150 meetings in FY 2004. Informative materials and booth exhibits were provided at over 120 meetings to date.

Result: Animal Care participates in many local, State, regional, national, and international meetings, providing information and updates to thousands of stakeholders and interested parties. We promote Animal Care, as well as other APHIS programs as appropriate. Our participation serves to strengthen our ties to the regulated community and the public (including animal concern groups), encouraging better and more uniform enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act.

During FY 2004, Animal Care addressed the two policies that involved drafts published in the Federal Register. The decision to publish draft versions of Animal Care policies was unprecedented and predicated on the nature of the issues involved (Environmental Enhancement for Nonhuman Primates and

Training and Handling of Potentially Dangerous Animals) and our desire to involve all interested parties in the process. Both policies relied on the use of current scientific knowledge and industry standards whenever available. Although the Training and Handling policy was cleared (two versions) by the Department and OMB, Animal Care elected to not publish the final policy, instead moving forward with enforcement of current regulations and standards and developing new regulations where needed. In FY 2004 we published a notice in the Federal Register announcing this decision. The nonhuman primate policy was not cleared based on concerns from one industry group, and, at the present time, several parties are developing a best practices document in lieu of the policy. Animal Care is still working with NIH to develop a document outlining best practices in nonhuman primate environmental enrichment.

Animal Care continues to update all outreach documents, including fact sheets and our new mission and operations brochure, "Animal Care: Safeguarding the Welfare of Animals." These materials, as well as a number of other publications, are distributed upon request and at more than over 115 meetings where Animal Care representatives have provided an information booth or otherwise distributed materials.

Animal Care assisted in more than 750 calls from the media in FY 2004. We had undertaken a widespread distribution of press releases to aid in keeping the public informed of animal welfare issues in the past. However, this information distribution has been modified under the current Administration. We are currently working with Legislative and Public Affairs to keep the public informed about Animal Care cases and enforcement actions, usually on a monthly basis.

Result: The use of press releases in local communities serves to keep all persons in those communities informed and advised of animal welfare activities and requirements.

Animal Care maintains active liaison activities with other Federal agencies, including National Institutes of Health, Food and Drug Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Marine Mammal Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Centers for Disease Control, and attends many meetings of the Interagency Research Animal Committee. We serve on the ICCVAM (Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods) committee and the USDA Farm Animal Well-being Task Group.

Innovative enforcement of our regulations has led to an increase in confiscation and placement efforts for animals that are found to be suffering. Cooperative

efforts involving USDA, humane associations, sanctuaries, and industry members have allowed for the voluntary placement of animals and the surrender of the licenses of the regulated parties. Fiscal Year 2004 saw the confiscation/surrender/ placement of approximately 170 animals. Animal Care provided VMOs and other personnel to aid in the VS program to deal with END in the Western US.

As part of Animal Care's enforcement and education actions, we performed almost 1000 searches for unlicensed dealers and exhibitors in FY 2004. As a result, 272 facilities were licensed and remain subject to the Animal Welfare Act regulations and standards.

2. Develop and increase program delivery outreach efforts to underserved customers.

Animal Care has established two working committees to address improvement of our outreach efforts. One group focuses on outreach efforts aimed at our regulated community, providing education and information to industry groups and other interested parties. A second group will develop outreach strategies that target the general population as a whole, including media campaigns and development of materials for distribution, such as printed information, web-based information, and cd-rom packages.

Animal Care continues to use our Public Service Announcement (commercial) on safe pet travel, and to provide brochures (over 20,000/year), "Live Animal" labels, fact sheets, luggage tags, and pencils to the public all geared to support our "Safe Pet Travel" campaign. The information in the update "Traveling with your pet" printed brochure can also be accessed electronically on our home page. Materials are provided to schools, travel agents, the general public, State veterinarians, and distributed at a wide variety of meetings and training sessions. The PSA has provided over \$1.21 million worth of air time to promote the Animal Welfare Act travel regulations in 2001.

Animal Care has provided a Fact Sheet in Spanish which summarizes one of our most popular brochures, "Traveling with your Pet." In FY 2004, we ordered the publication of the AWA and the regulations and standards in Spanish. These copies will be distributed, as needed, from our regional offices and headquarters.

Our outreach materials are distributed in hard copy and most are available on our web site. Although we cannot count how many documents are downloaded from our site, we have distributed over 82,000 documents in printed format this year. These documents include, but are not limited to, the Animal Welfare Act, the regulations and standards, our AC Policy manual, technical notes and fact sheets, list of licensees and registrants, our annual report, our licensing and registration guide, Horse Protection Act and regulations, and Scar Rule booklet.

Animal Care provides several active members for the APHIS Native American Working Group (ANAWG), and supports its programs to reach out to Native American populations. We have sent representatives to the Intertribal Agricultural Council and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society meetings.

Field inspectors continue to participate in local meetings, seminars, and school visits to provide information about the Animal Care program. In FY 2004, Animal Care inspectors have participated in over 50 local meetings and approximately 100 national and international forums.

Animal Care works under formal Memorandum of Understanding with NMFS and FWS in regulating marine mammals, and with the States of Missouri and Kansas in regulating dog and cat breeders, and more informally with other USDA agencies and programs, including Veterinary Services, Legislative and Public Affairs, and Investigative and Enforcement Services. Animal Care was involved in the cooperative effort to fight END in the Southwest, which also involved a MOU with the Department of Defense.

Animal Care has sponsored and organized, with the aid of the Library of Congress, meetings between our program and the State veterinarians. These seminars and meetings have been beneficial to the cooperation between State and Federal agencies.

Animal Care completed a research grant agreement with Texas A&M University, a land-grant college, to provide scientific information on the transportation and exercise and energy requirements of tigers. In addition to this ongoing research, Animal Care entered into a research grant with the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, to develop reliable serological testing techniques to determine the TB status in elephants. Animal Care is also supporting an APHIS Science Fellow studying thermoregulation and temperature requirements of mega vertebrates.

Animal Care inspectors and staff have also participated in a multi-organizational task group on helping pets after natural disasters, END, Monkey Pox, the AI task group in Virginia, State task groups on a variety of animal welfare issues, holding mock inspections for veterinary students, the Vermont Animal Control Response task Force, the Vermont Sheep Task Force, the Michigan TB Task Force, liaison with a MD county animal control agency, as well as participation in many Animal Care and APHIS committees and working groups. Animal Care also supported and coordinated the National TB Working Group for exotic hoofstock, focusing on elephant TB.

As part of the stakeholder outreach efforts, Animal Care developed and held at

least 5 symposia on dog care issues. These meetings were attended by over 600 participants, including Federal and state government representatives, licensees, and members of the general public.

To provide an educational forum for information dissemination on the care and handling of exotic big cats, Animal Care has developed a one day symposium to provide current industry and scientific information on topics such as transportation, veterinary care, nutrition, enclosure design, and training of big cats. In FY 2004, we sponsored two symposia (Columbus, OH, and Sarasota, FL), with two more planned for FY 2005 (October, 2004, in St. Louis, and December 2004, in Riverdale). Each symposium has averaged 100-120 persons in attendance and has been well received. All meetings are open to the public, with meeting brochures sent to all licensees with big cats, posted on our web page, and published in the Federal Register.

In an effort to incorporate the most current technology in our enforcement activities, Animal Care has invested in a GC/Mass Spec unit to identify foreign substances that may be used to sore horses. FY 2004 has been a pilot testing year, and Animal Care has held over 5 public sessions to introduce and discuss the technology.

Animal Care has taken preliminary steps to establish a formal outreach center through which all outreach activities can be coordinated in the future. Agency priority and funding issues have affected the culmination of this effort, but Animal Care did begin the search for the Outreach office director in FY 2004.

Result: All of these activities serve to provide information to any member of the interested public. Through the forums mentioned Animal Care continues to educate regulated and nonregulated entities on the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, as well as eliciting the help of the public in reporting violations of the Acts and instances of possible unlicensed activity. Animal Care employees remain involved in a broad range of related activities that promote animal care and welfare, and bring consideration of animal welfare to areas that may not have previously considered its importance and relevance.

3. Ensure internal policies, practices, and systems support fair and equitable delivery of programs and services.

All Animal Care headquarters and field personnel work directly with communities, customers, and stakeholders on a daily basis. Animal Care is involved with the current front-line survey for evaluating customer service, and will continue to provide training in interpersonal skills and customer service.

4. Ensure managers, supervisors, and other employees are accountable for program delivery outreach.

Performance evaluation criteria include liaison activity requirements for all supervisors, staff, and field personnel.